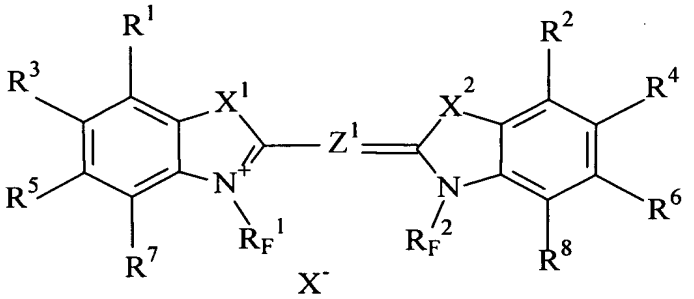
LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-23 (Canceled)

Claim 24 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber comprising, in a molecule thereof, a fluorine-containing substituent which ~~have~~ has at least 5 fluorine atoms.

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber according to claim 24, wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (1) as follows:



(1)

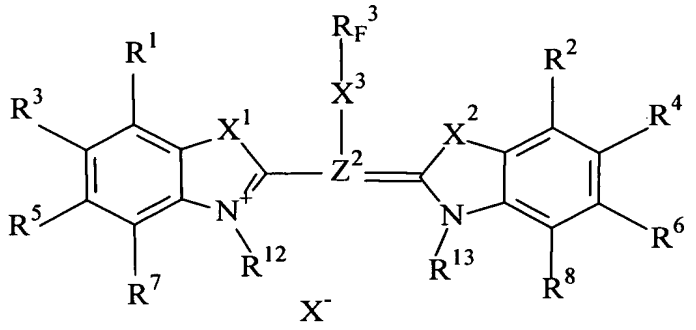
in which formula: each of R_F^1 and R_F^2 independently represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms; each of X^1 and X^2 independently represents $-CR^9R^{10}-$, -S-, -Se-, $-NR^{11}-$, -CH=CH- or -O-; R^1 to R^8 each independently represents a hydrogen atom, alkyl group, alkoxy group or halogen atom; R^1 to R^8 may represent a plurality of atoms such that at least one of pairs R^1 and R^3, R^2 and R^4, R^5 and R^7, R^6 and R^8, R^1 and X^1, and R^2 and X^2 can be mutually connectable to form an aliphatic 5-membered ring or 6-membered ring, an aromatic 6-membered ring or a substituted aromatic 6-membered ring;

R^9 and R^{10} each independently represents an alkyl group, or represent =CH- which are combined to form a ring; R^{11} represents an alkyl group;

Z^1 represents a heptamethine group, which may have one or more substituents selected from alkyl groups, halogen atoms, amino groups, arylthio groups, alkylthio groups, aryloxy groups, alkoxy groups, barbituric groups and ~~thiobartituric~~ thiobarbituric groups, and which may include a cyclohexene or cyclopentene ring formed by mutually bonding substituents on two methine carbons of the heptamethine group, which ring may further have a substituent selected from alkyl groups and halogen atoms; and

X^- represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge.

Claim 26 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber according to claim 24, wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (2) as follows:



(2)

in which formula: R_F^3 represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms; X^3 represents -NH-, -O- or -S-; each of R^{12} and R^{13} independently represents an alkyl group;

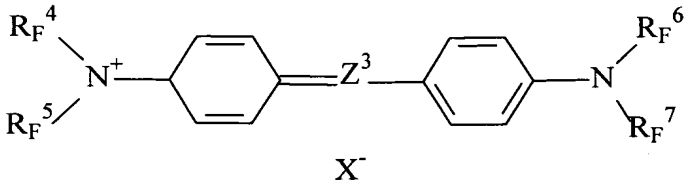
each of X^1 and X^2 independently represents $-CR^9R^{10}-$, -S-, -Se-, $-NR^{11}-$, -CH=CH- or -O-; R^1 to R^8 each independently represents a hydrogen atom, alkyl group, alkoxy group or halogen atom; R^1 to R^8 may represent a plurality of atoms such that at least one of pairs R^1 and R^3, R^2 and R^4, R^5 and R^7, R^6 and R^8, R^1 and X^1, and R^2 and X^2 can be mutually connectable to form an aliphatic 5-membered ring or 6-membered ring, an aromatic 6-membered ring or a substituted aromatic 6-membered ring;

R^9 and R^{10} each independently represents an alkyl group, or represent =CH- which are combined to form a ring; R^{11} represents an alkyl group; ~~and~~

X^- represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge; and

Z^2 represents a polymethine chain of at least 5 carbon atoms.

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber according to claim 24, wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (3) as follows:



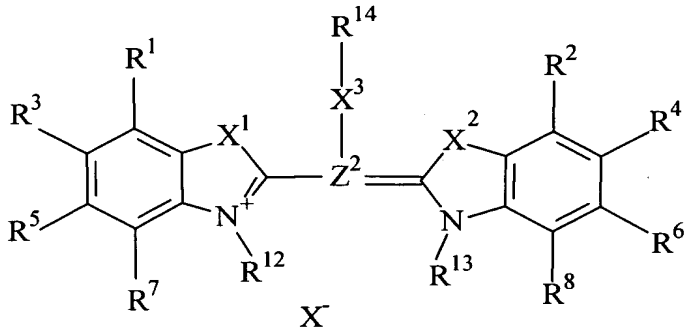
(3)

in which formula: each of R_F^4, R_F^5, R_F^6 and R_F^7 independently represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms or an alkyl group, and at least one of R_F^4, R_F^5, R_F^6 and R_F^7 represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms; Z^3 represents a pentamethine group, which may have a substituent selected from halogen atoms, hydroxyl groups, alkyl groups ~~possibly~~ optionally having a further substituent, aryl groups ~~possibly~~ optionally having a further substituent and heterocyclic groups, and which may also contain a cyclohexene or cyclopentene ring formed by mutually bonding substituents on two methine carbons of the pentamethine group, which ring may further have a substituent selected from alkyl groups and halogen atoms; and

X^- represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge.

Claim 28 (Original): An infrared absorber comprising a polymethine chain of at least 5 carbon atoms and an alkyl group of at least 8 carbon atoms, said alkyl group being connected to the polymethine chain via any of nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur.

Claim 29 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber according to claim 28 wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (4) as follows:



(4)

in which formula: R^{14} represents an alkyl group of at least 8 carbon atoms; X^3 represents -NH-, -O- or -S-; ~~Each~~ each of R^{12} and R^{13} independently represents an alkyl group;

each of X^1 and X^2 independently represents $-CR^9R^{10}-$, -S-, -Se-, $-NR^{11}-$, -CH=CH- or -O-; R^1 to R^8 each independently represents a hydrogen atom, alkyl group, alkoxy group or halogen atom; R^1 to R^8 may represent a plurality of atoms such that at least one of pairs R^1 and R^3, R^2 and R^4, R^5 and R^7, R^6 and R^8, R^1 and X^1, and R^2 and X^2 can be mutually connectable to form an aliphatic 5-membered ring or 6-membered ring, an aromatic 6-membered ring or a substituted aromatic 6-membered ring;

R^9 and R^{10} each independently represents an alkyl group, or represent =CH- which are combined to form a ring; R^{11} represents an alkyl group; ~~and~~

X^- represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge; and

Z^2 represents a polymethine chain of at least 5 carbon atoms.

Claim 30 (Canceled)